

## Fortifying. Leveraging. Increasing. Fostering. Encouraging. Ensuring.

### *The Commission's Cultural Plan Takes Off*

**F**or the 6,520 Maine residents who participated in and informed the recommendations in our new five-year cultural plan, *Fortifying Maine's Creativity & Culture, 2015-2020*, the power of collective action is a reality.

An unprecedented number of Maine people—from every zip code in the state—responded to the surveys and community forums in 2014-15, with the goal of understanding what artists, arts organizations, and arts educators need to connect more strongly to policy and communities. Participants included more than 1,000 individual artists and more than 450 cultural sector leaders from every one of the state's 16 counties – and hopefully, you!

Together, we identified five

priorities to help Maine develop a more thriving creative economy: and now we're taking action on them. Our goals are to ensure the great wealth of our cultural resources become a more visible and valued Maine asset and that artists, arts and cultural organizations, and arts education providers across the state have the support and resources needed to succeed.



Photo: Denise Rohdin

*Arts education for lifelong learners is a priority of this new Cultural Plan. See page 6 for info on our Creative Aging Program.*

#### **Investment**

*Attract and leverage greater investment in Maine's arts, culture, and creative economy.*

**Actions:** We're laying the groundwork to increase the state's budget appropriation to bring Maine's investment in arts and culture to a comparable level with other states. Maine currently budgets .73 per capita, placing it fifth among the six New England states; the national average is \$1.09. Recently at **Arts Advocacy Day** in Washington, D.C., we advocated for our Congressional delegation's support for increased federal funding via the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The budget for the NEA, similarly to the Commission, has not kept pace with inflation and today stands at a lowly .47 per capita compared to .68 in the 1980s.

*continued on page 3*

# From Our Executive Director



Julie Richard, Executive Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,  
Spring is here and we here at the Maine Arts Commission are busy with grant deadlines and conference planning.

The biggest news is that we have a new Poet Laureate! Stuart Kestenbaum was appointed Maine's fifth Poet Laureate at the end of March. Stu was the Committee's unan-

imous choice and he is already getting his feet wet with visits to the Legislature and legislative committees. We look forward to featuring Stu's work in this newsletter throughout his tenure.

We are also planning for our second Maine International Conference on the Arts (MICA) October 6 & 7 in Lewiston. Please mark your calendars! So far on the agenda, we will be holding three pre-conference sessions on the afternoon of October 6 prior to the opening reception and main conference keynote that evening. These pre-conferences will be focused on Arts Education, Craft in Maine, and Franco American Culture. The evening activities will start at 4:30 p.m. and be wrapped up in time for attendees to hit the town to sample various local arts and culture offerings.

The next day will open early with an Idea Lab (Pecha Kucha-style) presentation by various artists, followed by workshops, a luncheon keynote presentation, and special performances. Additional workshops to follow in the afternoon will round out the day. You will hear more about specific speakers and content as we get closer to the conference. In the meantime, please plan

on attending!

Since the legislation we presented – LD1490 & LD1493 – were passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor – thank you all – we are also working on the paperwork to launch ArtsEngageME, our new 501c3 support organization. Stay tuned as we move forward in the planning and launch.



Photo: Julie A. Richard

A national award-winning basket by Sarah Sockbeson, one of the Masters in our 2016 Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program profiled in this issue.

That's all for now. Thanks again for your service and support for the arts in Maine.

Best,

Julie A. Richard, Executive Director

## OUR VISION

Increase the impact of arts and culture on Maine's livability, vitality and prosperity.

## Commission Members

Charles Stanhope (Southwest Harbor)

Rowan Morse (Falmouth)

Kate Beever (Ocean Park)

Cynthia Murray-Beliveau (Hallowell)

Paul Benjamin (Rockland)

Cynthia Orcutt (Kingfield)

Rick Fournier (Bangor)

Laurence Rubinstein (Scarborough)

Suzanne Grover (Norway)

Heather Sincavage (Presque Isle)

Jonathan B. Huntington (Wayne)

**Cultural Plan**, continued from page 1

## **Awareness**

*Increase awareness of creative opportunities and their value to communities and local economies.*

**Actions:** We're updating our website, which artists, arts organizations, and arts educators can use to promote their work, discover opportunities, and apply for grants; have launched a strong social media presence @MaineArts; and this new quarterly print newsletter. In addition, Maine is a first-time statewide participant in Americans for the Arts' **Arts & Economic Prosperity 5<sup>®</sup>**, a national study on the economic impact of arts and culture which will add rich data to bolster our understanding and awareness of how important these sectors are to Maine's future.

## **Arts Education & Lifelong Learning**

*Foster PK-12 arts education and lifelong-learning programs.*

**Actions:** In addition to our statewide **Arts Education Census** (see Box), the Commission's arts education programs are robust, providing resources and services that extend far beyond existing grant programs. Through the **Maine Arts Leadership Initiative** (MALI), the Commission is in its sixth year of working to develop teacher leaders (now at 73 statewide) to ensure deep understanding and meaningful implementation of high quality teaching, learning, and assessment

in the arts. We host multiple programs for students as well, including **Poetry Out Loud** and the **Excellence in Maine Visual and Performing Arts** exhibits in the capitol. Our new **Creative Aging** program leverages the strengths of arts learning, such as social engagement and mastery of skills, to enhance the quality of life of adults over age 55. The mainearts.com site hosts an **Arts Education Resource Bank**, as well as **teaching artist rosters** for both Arts Education and Creative Aging.

## **Cultural Tourism**

*Encourage, enable, and increase synergies between culture and tourism.*

**Actions:** The formal MOU establishing our **Maine-New Brunswick Partnership** is now in its sixth year. The partnership hosts eight meetings a year to promote cross-border cultural collaborations.

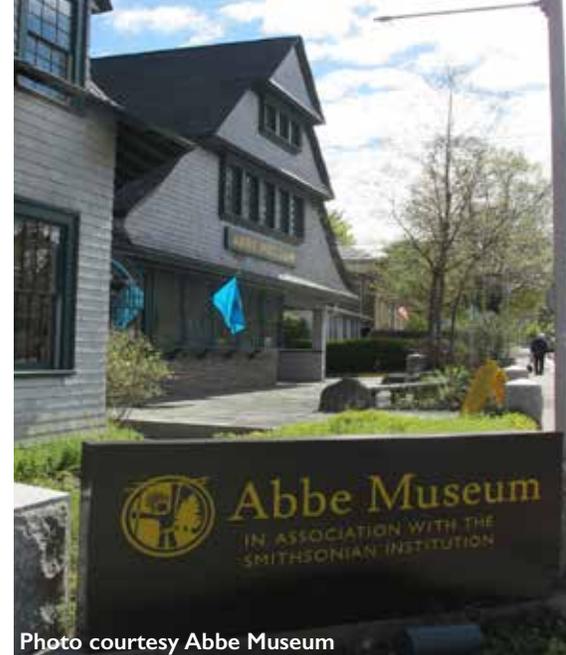


Photo courtesy Abbe Museum

The Commission now collaborates with the Maine Office of Tourism to better encourage both in- and out-of-state visitors to discover Maine's rich cultural heritage and opportunities. As part of our second **Maine International Conference on the Arts** in Lewiston-Auburn October 6-7, we will be offering workshops to further cultural tourism best practices, marketing, and PR.



## **Maine's Arts Education Census: Access and Equity**



With the support of project champion, famed singer-songwriter **Noel Paul Stookey**, we're working alongside the Maine Department of Education and many other partners to determine Maine's "State of Arts Education." At press time we've reached 86% of our goal of surveying 100% of Maine's 759 PK-12 schools. Our goal is to identify changes in

visual and performing arts education since the last census in 2008, as well as where students do and do not have access to quality arts education. The completed census and its resulting report will be a tool to increase awareness of the power of quality arts education as an essential element of student learning; and to implement local, regional, and statewide arts education programs to positively impact PK-12 education for all students. Has your school participated? Follow this link to check. If not, please encourage your school principal to complete the survey before April 30 at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MAINE\\_ARTS\\_ED](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MAINE_ARTS_ED).

# Meet 2016's Masters & Apprentices

## *The Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program*



Photo: Peter Dembski

*Somali Bantu master basket maker Atiy Haji.*

### **The Somali Bantu Community Association of Lewiston/Auburn: traditional basket making, music, fiber arts, and tinkering**

This thriving community association is sponsoring four master-apprentice teams. Atiy Haji is a master Somali Bantu basket maker who makes Dambiilo (market baskets), Masafs (flat baskets), and sisal mats called Sali. She will be teaching Malyun Negye, and will continue her work with the Somali Bantu Women's Basket weaving program.

Aden Hersi is an accomplished sharrara player and singer. The music plays an important role in Somali Bantu culture, especially at weddings, festivals and other special occasions. Aden will be teaching Abdullahi Sheikh.

Hassan Barjin, an accomplished tailor for many years at the Dedaab refugee camp in Kenya, will be teaching tailoring and embroidery to Halima Mohamed.

And Muhidin Libah, who is the Director of the Somali Bantu Community Association, is also a tumaal: a small scale metal worker who fixes watches, makes tin cups and also makes handmade weaving needles for basket makers. His apprentice is Abdulahi Muse.

### **Fan Luo, Chinese Folk Dance**

The Chinese and American Friendship Association of Maine (CAFAM) Chinese School is sponsoring master

Fan Luo to teach traditional Chinese folk dance to Mae Lan Rosenstein, Sylvie Ling Rosenstein and Lily Thompson. Growing up in China, Fan Luo began learning both folk and classical dance at the age of 10.

She moved to the United States more than 10 years ago and began teaching Chinese dance in Portland.

"Before I came to the U.S., I studied hard to prepare myself for life here. I was worried that I won't be able to fit in. Arts have always been a way for me to break into a new community," Fan said.

*Fan Luo performing a traditional Chinese wedding dance. Fan says she uses the dance forms of her native culture to speak to larger communities.*

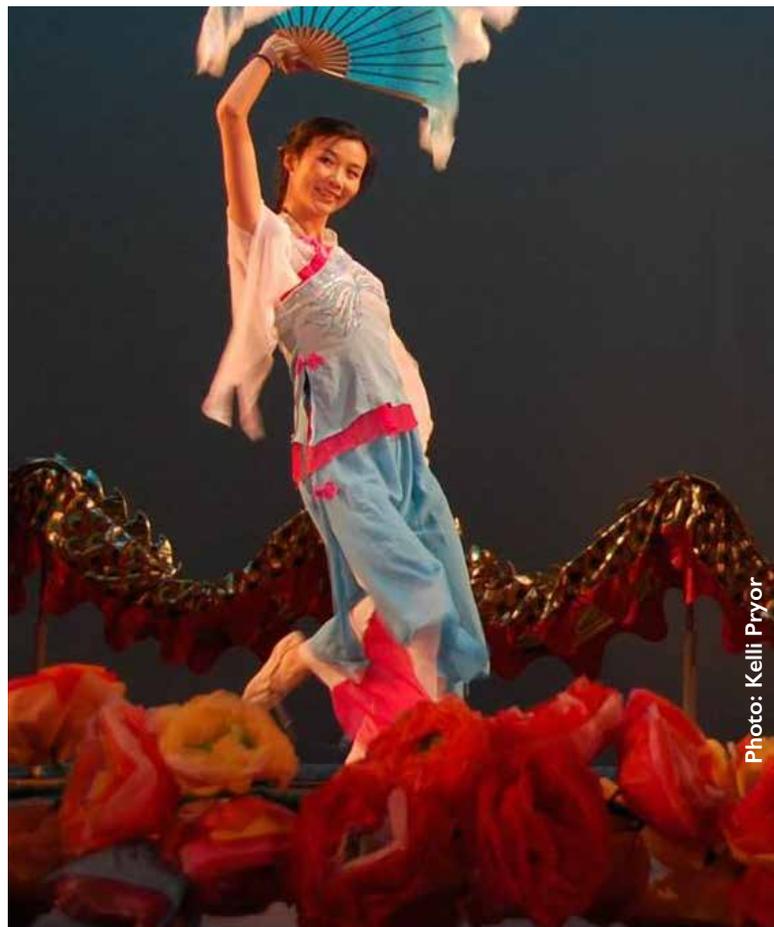


Photo: Kelli Pryor

## Sarah Sockbeson, Penobscot Basket Making

Sarah has been a basket maker since 2003, and apprenticed in this program in 2004 with Jennifer Neptune. She has been making a living as a basket maker for over 11 years. She will be teaching her apprentice Hilary Browne the tradition of gathering, preparing materials and weaving brown ash and sweetgrass into traditional Wabanaki baskets. "I've been an artist my entire life," she says. "Being Penobscot, I had seen baskets in museums and in the homes of my family members and was always fascinated by them. I was also told stories about my great-grandmother who was a basketmaker in the early 1900's." Sarah's baskets are in the permanent collections of several museums, and this year were featured in the Portland Museum of Art's Biennial exhibit. In March 2016, Sarah was awarded Best of Class and First Place prizes at the prestigious Heard Museum (AZ) Guild Indian Fair & Market.



Photo: William Drake

*"I've been an artist my entire life," says Sarah Sockbeson.*

## Julia Plumb, Dance Fiddle

Julia grew up within the longstanding traditions of New England contra and dance music. Her music is rooted in the music traditions of New England, Quebec, Appalachia, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, and Scandinavia. She sings and plays fiddle, banjo, and other instruments, and teaches at Maine Fiddle Camp as well as privately. "In my own journey as a fiddler, I've been fortunate to learn from many wonderful players here in Maine," Julia says. "It has felt like coming full circle in a distinctly different way to pass along that knowledge and elements of my own style to a young player in the context of an apprenticeship." Julia is teaching dance repertoire and playing style to apprentice Willy Clemetson, including having him accompany her and her band, Velocipede, on stage for live dance experience.

*Dance fiddler Julia Plumb performs frequently with her band Velocipede for traditional dances throughout Maine.*



# Creative Aging: A Program Whose Time Has Come

*“Sometimes I even stop to dry my hands while washing up the milk pails...”*

When the Charlotte Hobbs Memorial Library in Lovell received one of the Commission's first Creative Aging (CA) Partnership

grants in 2015 to fund storyteller and CA teaching artist Jo Radner to teach a series of eight workshops, they suddenly had a waiting list.

Sixteen people signed up for the “Art of Storytelling.” The workshops helped participants discover and enjoy their own most comfortable and effective styles of storytelling by exploring classic folktales, playing storytelling games, and learning new ways of mining their memories for their own narratives. Participants developed their individual goals in the class and learned how to find, create, and shape stories.

As Radner reports, “After a few weeks of meetings one man, a farmer, wrote, ‘I’ve started carrying a pen

and piece of paper in my shirt pocket to write down short phrases and thoughts that come to me. Sometimes I even stop to dry my hands while I’m washing up the milk pails so I can write something down before I forget it.”



*Creative Aging teaching artist Jo Radner with her “Art of Storytelling” class.*

Radner’s class culminated in a potluck “Tellabration” on December 8, at which every person told a well-developed story and the musician daughter of one participant framed the event with harp music. Radner recorded the stories and

presented each class member with a two-CD set as a memento. So enthusiastic were the tellers that the storytelling gatherings will extend through 2016 in a monthly “Liars’ Club,” sponsored by the library and open to the public.

## Creative Engagement through TimeSlips™

TimeSlips™, a nationally recognized program, uses improvisational storytelling as an intervention for people with dementia and other cognitive disabilities. TimeSlips™ invites people with memory loss to express themselves, encouraging creative engagement among participants and caregivers.

“Creative engagement changes the dynamics of the care relationship in order to foster both community and relationship-building, and a sense of individuality,” explains Anne Bastings, TimeSlips™ founding director.

Participants strengthen their social networks through creative storytelling with others, gaining a renewed sense of personal value and meaning. In TimeSlips™,

### How to Become a Creative Aging Teaching Artist

To become a teaching artist on our Creative Aging Teaching Artist Roster <https://mainearts.maine.gov/Pages/Traditional/Teaching-Artist-Roster>, a free online directory featuring Maine-based professional artists trained in Creative Aging, attend our informational workshop April 28 (details below), then apply by this year’s one-time only deadline of May 26. Additionally, The National Center for Creative Aging offers a free, 12-hour online training program at <http://www.creativeaging.org/artisttraining/>.

co-creating a story “opens up communication through emotional and symbolic communication that allows people to connect again, especially when language and narrative begin to fade,” reports Bastings.

With support from the MetLife Foundation and the National Center for Creative Aging, the Commission invited TimeSlips™ master trainer Joan Williamson (pictured at right) to the University of New England to conduct an all day workshop for interested caretakers, healthcare professionals, artists and family members.

One of the workshop participants, Annette Crosby, is the Resident Service Coordinator at Park Danforth, a senior living community in Portland where she now organizes a regular TimeSlips™ story telling group.

“The TimeSlips™ stories bring out the residents personal inner imagination of their life memories,” said Crosby. “A particular story may create a memory of a song, to which they sing with passion and that every verse is known. For those who may not be able to share the tune, you see the physical component



created by a nodding head, a tapping of a foot, and a clapping of hands, thus creates life from within their soul.”

*For profiles of other workshops and artists in the Creative Aging program, please go to <https://mainearts.maine.gov/Pages/Traditional/CreativeAging-Stories>. For more information, contact Kathleen Mundell, Program Director, at [kathleen.mundell@maine.gov](mailto:kathleen.mundell@maine.gov) or 207-287-6746.*

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**APRIL 25**  
Arts & Humanities  
14th Amendment:  
Special Grant  
Deadline

**APRIL 26**  
Maine Excellence  
in Visual &  
Performing  
Arts Education  
recognition  
ceremony, Hall of  
Flags

**APRIL 28**  
Informational  
workshop for  
artists to apply to  
the Creative Aging  
Teaching Artist  
Roster

**MAY 26**  
Deadline to apply  
to the Creative  
Aging Teaching  
Artist Roster

**JUNE 8-10**  
Public Grant  
Review Panels  
*call 287-2750 for  
more information*

**OCT 6-7**  
Maine  
International  
Conference  
on the Arts,  
Lewiston-Auburn  
*Save the Date!*



*Stuart Kestenbaum was appointed Maine's fifth Poet Laureate in late March and will serve a five year term. He is the author of four books of poetry.*

### **Prayer in the Strip Mall, Bangor, Maine**

The week after Thanksgiving and the stores are decked out for holiday shopping including a TJ Maxx where what was once too expensive loses its value and attracts us, there is a store with a big yellow banner proclaiming GIANT BOOK SALE, a seasonal operation of remaindered books, which doesn't mean that the books aren't good, only that the great machinery of merchandising didn't engage its gears in quite the right way and I buy two books of poetry and am leaving the store, the first snowstorm of the winter on the way and as I get to the glass double doors a bearded man with a cane is entering, he has been walking with a woman who is continuing on to another store and he has the look that could make him either eccentrically brilliant or just plain simple and as I open the door and he opens the other side he turns and says "I love you," not to me but calling back to his friend who is departing, only he's said it looking at me, closest to me, which is unintended love, random love, love that should be spread throughout the world, shouted in our ears for free.

from *Prayers and Run-on Sentences* (Deerbrook Editions, Cumberland, Maine 2007)